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Secretary Bodman Celebrates Clean Up Completion of Three Former Weapons Research and Production Sites in Ohio

Over 1,100 Acres in Fernald, Columbus and Ashtabula Restored

CROSBY TOWNSHIP, OH – U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today certified that environmental cleanup is complete at three former weapons research and production facilities in Ohio. In a ceremony at the Fernald site, Secretary Bodman, joined by Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Stephen L. Johnson and U.S. Senator George Voinovich (R-OH), commemorated the efforts of thousands of workers for their contributions at the Fernald Closure site in Crosby Township, the Columbus Closure site at the Battelle Memorial Institute, and the Ashtabula Closure Project at the Reactive Metal Inc. (RMI). As part of the cleanup and restoration effort, workers safely demolished hundreds of contaminated buildings, treated and disposed of millions of tons of waste, and performed extensive soil and groundwater remediation.

“Today we honor the rich past of these sites that played a critical role in the Cold War and celebrate the efforts to restore their environmental health,” Secretary Bodman said. “The Department of Energy has cleaned up over 1,100 acres in Ohio and, due to the many lessons learned at these sites, we are on track to safely clean up five additional sites across the nation in the next two years.”

“The Fernald facility cleanup embodies the Bush Administration’s commitment to turning problem properties back into local resources,” EPA Administrator Johnson said. “Together with our state and community partners, we have transformed a Cold War relic into an environmental asset.”

The Department’s declaration of closure today follows the completion of regulatory certifications from the State of Ohio and EPA. DOE will return 31 acres at the Columbus site to Battelle Memorial Institute and 42 acres at the Ashtabula site to Reactive Metals Incorporated for unrestricted industrial reuse. At Fernald, DOE will manage the long term protection of the 1,050 acre site as an undeveloped nature and wildlife reserve through monitoring and sampling of the 180 wells and groundwater. In addition, DOE will operate a Groundwater Treatment Facility to safely pump and treat water to the Great Miami Aquifer. DOE will open an education center at Fernald later this year that will offer members of the community and visitors a place to learn about the rich history of the Fernald site.

The Fernald site is a former uranium processing facility located 18 miles northwest of Cincinnati, Ohio, that produced uranium metal for use throughout the nuclear weapons complex during the Cold War era. After nearly four decades of operations, the Department and its contractors in 1991 began restoration of the contaminated site which included clean up of six waste pits, soil and groundwater remediation, waste treatment and disposal, demolition of over 300 buildings, and ecological restoration of 900 acres of the site to be used as a future nature reserve.

Battelle Memorial Institute (BMI) performed atomic energy research and development from 1943 through 1986 for DOE and its predecessor agencies, at its two laboratory facilities in the Columbus, Ohio, area. Since the late 1980s, DOE has demolished contaminated buildings and shipped nearly 1.7 million metric tons of waste out of Ohio.

The Department's Ashtabula site, from 1962 through 1988, received uranium products from Fernald for processing under a contract with DOE and its predecessor agencies. In Ashtabula, over the past ten years, DOE has safely transported over 1.1 million metric tons of waste to off-site commercial facilities.

During the ceremony Secretary Bodman, Administrator Johnson, and U.S. Senator George Voinovich (OH) unveiled a plaque that reads:

"Dedicated to the communities of Fernald, Columbus and Ashtabula, Ohio in commemoration of the cleanup of Department of Energy activities at these sites and of the critical contributions made to America's national and environmental security."

With the closure of the Fernald, Columbus, and Ashtabula sites, DOE has restored 84 sites that played a role in the Cold War era mission across the nation. In the past two years, DOE has safely cleaned up nine sites and is on track to close five more by 2009.

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